

# Preparing for the Season of Lent in 2023

In the preface to his book, *The Great Divorce*, C. S. Lewis observes:

You cannot take all luggage with you on all journeys; on one journey even your right hand and your right eye may be among the things you have to leave behind. . . . If we insist on keeping Hell (or even Earth) we shall not see Heaven: if we accept Heaven we shall not be able to retain even the smallest and most intimate souvenirs of Hell. I believe, to be sure, that any man who reaches Heaven will find that what he abandoned (even in plucking out his right eye) has not been lost: that the kernel of what he was really seeking even in his most depraved wishes will be there, beyond expectation, waiting for him in 'the High Countries.' (vii–ix)

The season of Lent is often understood as a time to “give something up.” For many evangelical Christians such an action has no value. I agree that if “giving something up” is all we do it has very little inherent value. However, the goal of Lent is not to create a mere absence. Rather, it is to continue to conform ourselves to the life of Heaven itself. As Lewis observes, Jesus at times calls us to “give up” those things that keep us out of that life; sometimes an eye, sometimes a hand, sometimes a family member, sometimes a sinful pleasure. To enter into a period of temporarily giving that thing up in order to learn to desire God and His life more than our own desire has a great deal of value. It may just lead us on to eternal life.

But, as I have reminded us in the past during this season, we do not want to create a vacuum by creating an absence. Rather, we want to be filled with the presence of God. So, if, for example, you are going to fast one meal per week, don't just cease eating. Set that time aside to feast on the word (read Scripture) and pray. A hunger for food is only valuable if it leads to a deeper hunger for God.

I also encourage you to use the daily devotional during this season of Lent. There are two ways to approach this:

First, you can simply read the assigned passage for the day, read my reflection, and pray along with my prayer. Or, if you want to go deeper you could . . .

Second, you can begin by practicing *Lectio Divina*. This is an ancient Christian practice of allow Scripture to speak to you. You begin in quiet prayer, asking the Spirit of God to speak a word especially to you through the text. Then slowly read through the text several times, paying attention to any word, sentence, or thought that is “lifting out” to you. Then sit with that word asking the Spirit why He has brought that to your attention—what is He saying to you? Then ask what the Spirit wants you to do with that insight. What should your response be? Once you feel finished with the *Lectio*, then finish reading my reflection and prayer.

Beyond this, if you want to enter into the season of Lent, speak with me (Pastor David) and we can build a plan together.

Grace and Peace,  
Pastor David